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for Quality Assurance at Institutional Level“**

IBAR

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IBAR
Quality and Students Assessment
Slovak Comparative Analysis
Work Package 7

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Introduction



The research realized within WP 7 was aimed at analysis of the student assessment at HEIs in Slovakia. Objectives of the WP 7 are based on ESG in which assessment of students is taken as one of basic attribute of quality of higher education. ESG take into consideration the rules by which students should be „assessed based on consistently applied publicized criteria, by-laws and consecutions“. The submitted comparative analysis is focused on description of actual situation in field of assessment of students at Slovak HEIs as well as identification of barriers in implementation of the assessment consecutions regarding to QA at HEIs. The basic relation between quality of education and assessing criteria is expressed based on interest of applicants for individual study programs, a required input knowledge of applicants, as well as a guarantee of study programs and subjects by renowned professors and associate professors, including the requirement on a qualification structure of teachers. Other assessment criteria are aimed at study results of students (based on ECTS, the average marks - Grade Point Average, exclusion and dropouts) as well as their involvement in scientific and artistic activities, obtaining national and international awards, as well as material and technical conditions for their study.

The area of student assessment as a part of all institutional practices of individual HEIs universities are derived from the national legislation of the Slovak Republic . On the one hand, the link between institutional policies and national policy provides a guarantee to achieve a certain degree of quality at the national level , but on the other hand, acts as a barrier to the development of its own initiative, higher education institutions in the area.

Nationwide basic standards for the student assessment declares Act . 131/2002 on Higher Education and the Decree Nr . 614/2002 on Credit Systems introducing ECTS in Slovakia. The Law on Higher Education defines obligations concerning e.g. required competencies of the HEIs teachers, the composition of the various examination boards etc. Methods of assessment are presented in the accreditation documents of study programs in the factsheets of individual subjects. The Decree defines the basic forms of student assessment (interim and final assessments) , classification scale of student assessment (divided into 6 classification grades from A to FX), the criteria for credits and standards for assessment of the overall study results followed in specified period (e.g. weighted grade average).

Theme of the student assessment creates a part of the long term strategies of HEIs where it is linked to the QA of education. Students can affect long term strategies through the Academic Senates (it ensures participation of students in setting of criteria for their assessment). In



addition to long-term strategies, the issue of student assessment is included into different internal documents.

The student participation in seminars and exercises is required, and represents a common practice at HEIs. Different approaches are in assessment of compulsory subjects and practical trainings where individual HEIs internally decide which of them will be scored and which not.

It is visible increasing of written assessment against the oral methods, particularly in the groups with higher number of students.

Information and communication technologies are more and more effectively used within the assessment processes (including electronic self-testing).

Impact of ongoing assessment of students in the whole semester significantly increased, the results of ongoing studies become part of the overall assessment of the appropriate subject.

Increasing of transparency and objectivity of the students assessment incl. increasing of IT role in the assessment processes is visible.

Research methods

Four public HEIs representing network of 20 public, 3 state and 10 private HEIs in Slovakia, were taken as a resource of research data. The following HEIs were involved:

- Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra (UKF)
- Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica (UMB)
- University of Žilina (ZU)
- Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Bratislava (VSVU)

Respondents of the research were as follows:

- Management of HEIs – vice rectors for educations – in the number 4
- Management of faculties – deans and vice deans for education- in the number 26
- Samples of students – e.g. members of Academic senates – in the number 133



Information resources

The following basic information resources were used:

- Legislative documents aimed at education, internal by – laws
- Web pages of HEIs
- Enquiries with open questions submitted to management of universities and faculties
- Semi - structured interview with students

The main analyzed external documents concerning assessment of students, valid on national level were as follows:

- Law No. 131/2002 on the Higher Education Institutions
- Ordinance of the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic No. 614/2002 on Credit System

The analyzed internal documents of individual HEIs included into research sample were as follows:

- Long Term Strategies
- Study Regulations
- Scholarship Regulations
- Internal Regulations on Entrance Exams
- Study Guides

Background

Basic norms aimed at the assessment of students are identified by the Law No. 131/2002 on Higher Educational Institutions. It defines the frame obligations concerning an entrance of the students at HEIs, the required qualification of pedagogues, incl. their research and educational competences, as well as constitution of final exam commissions.

The assessment of students is affected by accreditation of study programs. The study programs are approved by the state Accreditation Commission which evaluates the content



and goals of study subjects regarding to an alumni profile. It also defines a personal guarantee of the study programs as well as material and technical conditions for study.

The next important document is the Ordinance of Ministry of Education No. 614/2002 on Credit System which enables an implementation of ECTS in Slovakia. It defines the basic forms of the students assessment (continuous and final), the classification scale of assessment (divided on 6 degrees, from A to Fx), the criteria for granting credits as well as the standard evaluation of the overall study results over a specified period (Grade Point Average). It is a high degree of interconnection between national policy and institutional policies of individual HEIs in the field of students assessment. It provides, on the one hand, assurance to reach a certain quality at the national level. On the other hand, it is becoming a barrier in developing HEIs own initiative in this area.

Findings

Field No. 1

Institutional policy

All researched HEIs pay attention to the student assessment. It is joined with implementation of Bologna process in Slovakia. It is the main reason why the student assessment stopped to be just a theme of pedagogues and it became an agenda of the Slovak HEIs institutional policy in education as well.

a) Strategic level

Assessment of students regarding to QA creates a part of long term policies of individual HEIs. A responsibility to include the subject of the student assessment into official policy documents is up to leading managers of HEIs or individual faculties. The process of approval of the policy documents is based on larger participation. Except of HEIs/faculties leading managers, the pedagogues, researchers, office workers, students, representatives of Academic Senate as well as professionals from other HEIs who are members of Scientific Board, participate in.

b) Normative level

The researched HEIs have a subject of the student assessment incorporated into their internal policy documents. They follow a legislation valid on national level as well as ECTS standards. Documents have a form of internal by-laws or guidelines. They are



obligatory for all subjects participated in the assessment process (managers of HEIs/faculties, pedagogues, students, office workers...). The process of approval is similar to the process realized on the strategic level. They have to be agreed not only by leading managers but also by members of Academic Senate and in some cases by Scientific Board.

c) *Executive level*

Principles of the student assessment are applied in creating process of the study programs. Information concerning the process as well as the forms of students assessment are included into the appropriate study program. Guarantor of the study program is responsible for its creation. Also guarantors of individual study subjects are accountable for them. The specific criteria of the student assessment are prepared and executed by individual pedagogues and guaranteed by guarantors of the appropriate study subjects and study programs. The objectives, content and assessment procedures of individual study subjects are presented in detail within the Information Sheets. Each study subject has defined a credit value, which students should gain based to the conditions, specified in the appropriate Information Sheet. Assessment of study subject is realized either in the form of continuous assessment, final test/exam or just participation in the study subject. Assessment of the student knowledge is realized based on a Grade Point Average calculated for each student within the appropriate academic year. The students who achieve the excellent study results can be awarded by the Dean or the Rector's Award at the end of the study program.

Examples of the direct students participating in a process to create criteria of their assessment within the appropriate study programs/study subjects was not discovered. The participation of students from the Academic Senate was identified within the policy making process (on normative level). They can express their opinion on the forms and methods of their assessment. Feedback on assessment is regularly obtained through questionnaires, in which students can individually evaluate teachers and comment on their continuous and final assessments. The results of the evaluation are included into the official Reports on Educational Activities of HEIs / Faculties, as well as the Annual Report of HEI / Faculties. They are presented and discussed within the



College of Rector/Deans of Faculties, the Scientific Boards of HEIs / Faculties, as well as within meetings of heads of individual Departments.

d) *Communication level*

The electronic information systems which are used for an assessment or registration its results became an important part of the assessment process. They are also used for internal and external communication with different target groups (students, guarantors, leading managers of HEIs/faculties/departments, office workers, applicants of HEIs, Ministry of Education, Research, Science and Sport, other institutions...).

Access of students to information concerning their assessment seems to be satisfactory on the strategic and normative levels. HEIs publish their internal policy documents on own web pages as well as within special guides for beginning students. Syllabus of study program contains some frame information concerning the student assessment including the basic assessment criteria. Syllabus are often published on HEIs web pages, within their electronic information systems or internal print publications. A lack of detailed specification concerning conditions to gain the credits seems to be a barrier. It is possible to observe differences in specification of conditions among the individual HEIs as well as individual pedagogues.

Field No.2

Assessment methods

a) *Diagnostic level*

Diagnostic assessment of students is used preferably in an entrance process. Individual HEIs, faculties and study programs differ in the entrance conditions. Some of them are based on the secondary school results, the others require an entrance examination, or they use a combination of both previous forms.

If the entrance exam is not obligatory, HEIs take into consideration either an overall assessment of individual subjects achieved by applicants during their studies at secondary school or subjects pertaining to the profile of the student (graduate) which are required by a specific HEIs study program. Other activities realized within secondary education related to the HEI study programs can be also taken into



entrance assessment. This type of admission occurs only sporadically (usually it is applied in case of the students applying for study courses with less numbers of applicants). Majority of HEIs requires the entrance exams. It is aimed at checking of knowledge achieved in core subjects of the appropriate study program. Checking of abilities and skills is realized by forms of the aptitude tests. It is required mainly in case of sport or art study programs.

Diagnostic assessment of knowledge on a level of individual subjects is occurred occasionally (e.g. in study programs focused on foreign languages).

Diagnostic assessment of students already admitted to the appropriate study program is rare and it is depended on initiative of individual pedagogues. Only one of the four researched HEIs has included a diagnostic assessment within individual subjects to its internal by-law as a systematic component of internal policy. Participation of students in a diagnostic assessment is not obligatory. Interest of 75% of students attending the appropriate subject is anticipated. The internal by-law is quite a new, it was approved in 2011 and therefore it is difficult to evaluate results of its implementation.

b) Formative level

HEIs use different methods of formative assessment of students knowledge, abilities and skills depending up a content and goal of the study subject as well as number of attending students. Forms of exams are different – written testing, combination of written and verbal exams, protocols from laboratory practices, presentations, case studies, essays... . Continuous and final assessments are almost used to assess the study subjects. The results of continuous assessment are personally communicated with students and included into a final assessment of the appropriate subject.

Pedagogues offer to students the opportunity to achieve the positive assessment results based on tests published on e-learning portal or in the Academic Information System. They enable students to pre-test their knowledge before the regular terms of assessment. The methods is based on the system of “mastery learning” which prefers the smaller parts of study content. Students can define own study rate and have an access to continual testing of their knowledge. The pre-tests are not assessed by



pedagogues. They serve only as a feed - back for students. Students have just one important task, to master the appropriate study subjects to the term of official exams. These kinds of methods are used in the study subjects like management, informatics, mathematics, foreign languages... .

Some faculties use the assessment methods based on self – reflection of the students. They are used in the study subjects like psychology, communication, management of human resources... . Self – reflection is realized by a form of written diary in which students record own ideas, attitudes and opinion about the study objectives or the appropriate situations. Students can compare own experience with theory. They record changes in their personal development, critical thinking as well as a progress in their ability to solve problems following on study subject. The assessment methods belong to the rare ones.

Formative assessment methods in a case of the fine - art study programs combine internal and external assessment. Level of the student progress assessed by internal criteria is confronted with assessment of external professionals (e.g.in forms of review) within public presentations (open to laic as well as professional public). The assessment methods are mainly focused on progress actually achieved in the students knowledge, abilities and skills in the appropriate subject or program. Assessment methods aimed at the students potential were not identified at Slovak HEIs.

In case of student dissatisfaction with their assessment, they can contact the guarantors of the appropriate study subject or study program or the head of the Department in which teaching of the subject is provided. If assessment is not objective, the student can apply for a commission examination.

c) Summative level

The level of achieved knowledge, abilities and skills is assessed within individual study plans. The quantitative assessment where the students are evaluated based on the ECTS grading scale (A-FX) is used. After achieving the required level, students are assessed by credits. The assessment process is realized based on written or verbal forms. In a case of verbal form, students acquire a proximate feed - back from pedagogues. In a case of written forms, students acquire feed - back later (up to 7 days). Students have a claim to look into written tests, respectively ask pedagogues for



some specific assessment information. HEIs also offer to students the opportunities to consult problematic fields with guarantors of study subjects or study programs, respectively with leading manager of the appropriate Department.

State final exam is obligatory for all students attending the accredited study programs. Its content is composed from a defense of diploma work as well as exams covering key fields of the appropriate study program. A profile of alumni is also taken into consideration. State exam is assessed by the state exam commission composed at least from 4 pedagogues, at least one of them should be from external institution (mostly from the other HEI).

Field No.3

Assessment of students and objectives of study programs/study subject

Objectives of study programs and study subjects.

Slovak HEIs differ in level of processing of objectives of their study programs and subjects. Objectives of the study programs are identified based on the alumni profile. It is required by state accreditation in which all HEIs have to respect an unified form of accreditation document. It contains the exact description of alumni of the appropriate study program. The Ministry has also published a description of study field, which defined the requirements on alumni. It is required by a state accreditation in which all HEIs have to respect an unified form of accreditation document. It contains the exact description of alumni of the appropriate study program. The Ministry has also published a description of study field, in which the exact requirements on alumni are defined. It means, all HEIs which are interested in accreditation of the appropriate study program have an obligation to guarantee what kinds of skills and abilities their alumni will achieve. Some HEIs have included their obligation to establish objectives of the appropriate study programs into their internal policy documents. Before submitting the study programs to be accredited by the Ministry, they have to be approved on a level of academic and advisory bodies.

The accredited study programs have clearly defined the learning outcomes regarding to knowledge, skills and competences which the alumni of study program should achieve to



become successful on the labor market by a form of alumni profile. Neither exact indicators for measuring of expected learning outcomes nor any implementing methods, are identified in the study programs. It causes that quality of education based on learning outcomes has been not realized yet.

Identification of learning outcomes on a level of study subjects is rare, it was identified just at some HEIs. If they are defined, they are included in the Information Sheets.

Assessment methods and educational results.

HEIs declare a dependance of assessment methods on the alumni profile or educational objectives as a part of study programs. Two approaches to their linking have been identified. The first one is based on establishment of three – stage hierarchic system of responsibility to perform the alumni profile. Guarantor of the appropriate study program responds for the whole program. The study subjects which create a part of study programs have own guarantors as well. They respond to perform the educational objectives of the appropriate subjects. The third level is represented by individual pedagogues who realize education in concrete subjects. They account for the results to guarantors of the appropriate subjects.

The second approach is based on the educational methods. They follow content of the study subject or study program. Used educational methods are different regarding to the required educational objectives – knowledge, skills, abilities and experiences of students and alumni. The assessment methods follow the educational ones and are aimed at assessment of achieved knowledge, skills, abilities and experiences.

Field No. 4

Objectivity of the student assessment

Internal criteria and rules of the student assessment are defined in the Study Ordinance of all HEIs. The Study Ordinance contains general information concerning the conditions for assignation of credits, the classification scale by which are assessed the study results as well



as procedural information of assessment (e.g. the prescription rules of the terms of exams, possible numbers of alternative examination dates...)

The detailed information concerning the student assessment (incl. objectives of the appropriate study subject and assessment methods to perform them) are described in Information Sheets.

Students are informed about the results of the appropriate exams immediately or in terms defined in the Study Ordinance by a verbal form or based on electronic information systems. Students are usually assessed by one teacher who validates their knowledge, skills and competencies in respect of defined objectives. In the case of oral examinations, a subjectivity of teachers is higher. However, some evaluation processes that increase the objectivity of the assessment of students have been incorporated at HEIs. Application of points system where points are allocated for different parts of objects such as seminars, written tests, oral tests is one of them. Points are assigned to students for their participation in individual parts of subject's education (e.g. participation in seminars, practice, oral exam, written exam...). Points for exam create just a part of general assessment and therefore subjectivity of pedagogues educated the individual study subjects is decreased.

Compulsory parts focused on preparing of the project or semester work are often included as a part of study subjects. They are very often assessed not just by one pedagogue but by a commission. The Ordinance on Study enables students to be assessed based on commission exams within individual study subjects.

Legislation of Slovak Republic obliges all HEIs to establish the special state exam commissions for final state exams. Each of them has to have at least 4 members with exactly defined requirements on their academic or research profiles. At least one member of commission has to be from external environment of HEI. These rules create some conditions for objectiveness of assessment within final state exams.

Examples of good practice

One of the faculties started with a new internal assessment policy from the academic year 2008/2009. It obliges all its pedagogues to inform students about the detailed assessment criteria in the appropriate study subject by form of their publishing on special electronic boards/screens. Information include not only description of criteria by which study credits



are/are not assigned but also a share of each criteria within general assessment. Information also include an updating of study materials, syllabus or important dates. The new policy of assessment creates a part of new internal document which was approved by the College of Dean.

One of HEIs approved a new policy document focused on establishment of rules of continuous evaluation of quality of education in 2011. The policy document will be implemented within individual faculties of HEI.

One of HEIs provides information for students concerning criteria of their assessment directly within their first classes or based on electronic Information Sheets.

Field No. 5

Assessment criteria

a) Entrance procedure

HEIs identify criteria of applicants assessment in their internal policy documents. The documents have to be approved by academic bodies of individual faculties. Criteria are published on HEIs web pages. Level of entrance criteria' specification is different on individual faculties. Some of them more generally specify the skills and knowledge which are assessed within the entrance procedure. The other ones describe not only the individual criteria but also give information about required level of their achievement. Terms of publishing of criteria is defined for all HEIs by national legislation.

b) Student assessment and grades

Criteria for students assessment are defined by all HEIs in their internal Study Regulations. They are based on ECST scale. Detailed criteria concerning the student assessment are published in the Information Sheets or in the electronic information system. Some HEIs delegate a responsibility for publishing the assessment criteria on pedagogues who personally inform students about at the beginning of the appropriate semester. Individual HEIs differ in level of specifying of assessment criteria. Some of them delegate to individual pedagogues a responsibility for specification of criteria.

c) Absence of students



Individual HEIs differ in access to absence of students. If the detailed assessment criteria for achievement of credits are specified, an absence causes a decrease of points gained for student's participation in individual parts of education. The other attitude of HEIs is affected by „tradition“ which enables to tolerate a certain number of absences (1-3 absences per a semester). Tolerated absences are not published in official documents. Pedagogues have individual access in looking at student's absence from health, social as well as other personal reasons. One of HEIs has created an internal policy for long term absences from personal reasons. It is based on individual study plan. Its conditions are officially published on its web page. The long term student's scholarship which can positively affect their educational or research development can be taken as a reason for their individual study plan.

HEIs differently assess various forms of educational activities. Participation of students in seminars and practical experiences is required by all HEIs. Participation in lectures is not obligatory and in majority of cases is not taken into consideration in assessment of students. Decisions concerning assessment of absences in lectures are partly delegated to pedagogues. Establishment of clear and understandable criteria to achieve credits are well evaluated by students. Different access to absences seems to be a problematic one, mainly in cases when students have the opportunity to compare different attitudes of pedagogues.

Field No 6.

Mechanisms of verification of student assessment procedures

The following verification mechanisms have been identified within Slovak HEIs:

a) Commissionial Exams

It is defined in national as well as in internal documents. Students or pedagogues can initiate a demand concerning commissionial exams. HEIs differ in levels how exactly they define its procedures and rules.

b) The exams realized in case of repeated enrollment of the study subject

One of HEIs applies a special revision mechanism in case of repeated enrollment of the study subject within alternative terms. This exam is assessed at the same time by the other pedagogue, e.g. by guarantor of study subject or study program. In case the seminars/practical exercises are taught by the pedagogues with a right of continuous



assessment and lectures are provided by a professor or associated professor, responsibility for the final student assessment is delegated to professor or associated professor.

c) Assessment of diploma works

Diploma works are assessed by two professionals with experiences from a field of diploma work. Final assessment is realized by the state Commission for Final Exam which is composed from at least 4 members incl. external professionals.

d) Supervision of pedagogues

Pedagogues as well as internal PhD. students providing pedagogical activities, have to be supervised. Supervision is provided by form of participation of more experienced colleagues, e.g. guarantors of study subject, in lectures of young pedagogues or internal PhD. students. And vice versa, young pedagogues or internal PhD. students participate in lectures of more experienced pedagogues who become their tutors.

e) Evaluation of pedagogues realized by students

Based on conclusions of evaluation of pedagogues realized by students are identified the study subjects, resp. pedagogues with negative rating. Senior staff responsible for the pedagogues usually solves the situation by form of interview with the appropriate pedagogue. Tasks and arrangements to prevent existing problems in the next period are identified. Some HEIs require teachers and PhD students who are involved in the teaching process to increase their educational capacity through the supplementary pedagogical education.

f) Analysis of students assessment based on ECTS grading scale

One authorized person (usually a vice dean for education) has access to data concerning the distribution of student assessment within individual subjects.



The above mentioned verification mechanisms are not equally used at all HEIs. Some of them are used sporadically, in some faculties only. Internal rules which identify the procedures, responsibilities and consequences of verification process are absent.

Filed No. 7

The student assessment and skills/abilities achieved at secondary schools.

Skills and abilities obtained at secondary schools are incorporated into assessment realized within an entrance process. Required knowledge and competences of the secondary schools students are identified within a nation-wide qualification framework. The differences occur among individual secondary schools regarding to content of education and structure of study subjects. HEIs requirements on applicants are equal for all interested persons regardless of secondary school in which they graduated. If applicant successfully fills all entrance conditions, there are no differences in requirements. Different level of education achieved within secondary school as well as a lack of initial knowledge or abilities are usually solved by students alone (e.g. by form of their attending in the remedial classes).

Some HEIs offer to students different additional courses, e.g. within life long learning programs. They can help them to overcome initial deficit of their knowledge. Some HEIs offer to the beginning students a participation in different creative activities in which they can use their knowledge, abilities or experiences achieved at secondary schools and thus to improve the final assessment in some study subjects.

Field No. 8

External participants/stakeholders/ agencies and assessment of students

Concept how to assess students within the entrance exams, the exams realized in educational process, final state exams as well as how to assess emplacement of alumni on labor market is included in the accreditation documents. It is approved by the State Accreditation Commission which evaluates and consequently approves all documents within the process of accreditation. Members of Commission can personally participate in educational processes, entrance exams... within a process of accreditation. Accreditation belongs to the one of the fields where the external institutions participate in. A share of external participants in the other assessment areas is limited. If external professionals/pedagogues are experts in fields of



diploma works, they usually fill a role of supervisor or opponent of diploma works. External stakeholders can also become members of state final exam commissions. External participants who are not pedagogues or don't come from academic environment don't have a right to assess students of HEIs.

Field No. 9

Changes in assessment

Changes concerning assessment of students have been identified mainly in the following areas:

- a) Enlargement of assessment forms, the forms more depend on objectives of the appropriate study subject (exam, continuous assessment, ...)
- b) Enlargement of space for continuous assessment of students within whole semester, its results are included into final assessment
- c) Increasing of share of written methods in assessment (in comparing to verbal ones), it is caused mainly by increasing number of students
- d) Application of IT in assessment process. Students have more opportunities to use form of auto - testing which enable them to gain a continual feed - back of their knowledge and competences. IT tools significantly enlarged a space for communication between pedagogues and students as well as registration of all assessment documents.
- e) Creating of new internal by – laws concerning assessment policy, new systems of the complex student assessment based on grade scale have been implemented at one HEI.
- f) Establishment of more exacting criteria in the student assessment should bring a higher quality of alumni and study programs
- g) Tightening of criteria for assessing students – to provide a higher quality students and graduates of degree programs
- h) Increasing transparency and objectivity of the entrance examination - the use of bar codes, involvement of external firms into entrance exams
- i) Increasing utilization rate of on-line forms reporting the results of the student assessment.

Changes concerning assessment of students are implemented at Slovak HEIs on different levels. A very low motivation of students as well as pedagogues to realize new assessment



procedures belongs to the main barriers identified within implementation process. Mainly the pedagogues take the new approaches to assessment as a concept which is very time consuming. An increasing number of students allocated to the same number of pedagogues is another barrier that negatively affects the implementation of changes in the student assessment. HEIs prefer a policy aimed at phasing of changes concerning the student assessment.

CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions relating to aspects of students assessment can be summarized into several points:

- Slovak HEIs pay the appropriate attention to institutional policy in assessment of students. Managers as well as pedagogues understand importance of this field as well as dependence of quality in education on assessment of students. It creates a good background for the next development of the area.
- Rules and practices concerning an assessment of final exams within study programs are sufficiently defined in internal policy documents – e.g. composition of exam commissions, exactly designated form and content of diploma works... are exactly defined.
- Continuous assessment within whole semester, enabling combination of several methods (verbal and written ones) as well as observation of progress of student's knowledge, competences and skills are taken as positive changes in this field.
- A high degree of interconnection between national policy and institutional policies of individual HEIs in the field of students assessment. It provides, on the one hand, assurance to reach a certain quality at the national level. On the other hand, it is becoming a barrier in developing HEIs own initiative in this area.
- Lack of internal policy documents defining exact rules and procedures in assessment of individual study subjects is considered for HEIs weakness.
- Learning outcomes as quality indicators are not implemented at any HEI in Slovakia. Some study programs, respectively study subjects have already defined learning outcomes within accredited documents or information sheets. It creates a good base for their implementation in process of educational quality assurance. One of researched HEI started a new project focused on this field.



- Absence of systematic verification of assessment was identified as other weakness of HEIs. Verification as a tool is sporadically used, without clearly defined rules and responsibilities.
- Using of IT technologies have some gaps in communication of clear and understandable assessment criteria for the appropriate study subject. IT technologies offer much more opportunities for communication than are currently used for. Pedagogues very often prefer a verbal communication within assessment what is difficult to be verified by other persons (other pedagogues, management, representatives of external institutions...). (Annex B)
- Limits are visible in field of entrance assessment of knowledge, skills and competences of applicants/students on level of individual study subjects.
- Increasing number of students allocated to the equal number of pedagogues causes using of simplified assessment methods as well as decreasing of feed-back provided for students.
- Limited access of external stakeholders/participants to assessment of students is taken as weakness of Slovak HEIs as well.

ANNEX A

One of the faculties of Slovak HEIs introduced a new point system for assessment of students in individual subjects, where the conditions for obtaining credits, depending on the gained points in the subject as well as the grading scale are explicitly expressed. The system started from academic year 2011/12.

Mark (classification level)	Verbal definition of classification	Extent of knowledge (%)	Numeric value
A	Excellent (excellent results)	92 – 100	1
B	Very good (above average results)	84 – 91	1,5
C	Good (average results)	76 – 83	2
D	Satisfactory (satisfactory results)	68 – 75	2,5
E	Sufficiently (results fill minimal requirements/criteria)	60 – 67	3



FX	Non sufficiently (results don't fill minimal requirements/criteria)	Less than 60	4
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ANNEX B

One of the faculties started with a new internal assessment policy from the academic year 2008/2009. It obliges all pedagogues to inform students about the detailed assessment criteria in the appropriate study subject by form of their publishing on special electronic screens. Information include not only description of criteria by which credits for the study subject are/are not assigned to students but also their share on general assessment. Information are also aimed at updating of study materials, syllabus or important terms. A new policy is described in a new internal policy document which was approved by the College of Dean.